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**THE BEGINNINGS OF UNIVERSITY LIFE
IN AMERICA**

BY

CARLOS E. CASTAÑEDA, PH.D.

Historiographer of the Mission Era in Texas

ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMISSION
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Acronyms
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BY

PAUL J. FOIK, C.S.C.

Foreword

While this contribution does not come directly within the scope of Texas history, the treatment, however, like some other studies of the series which have preceded it, shows the cultural background of Spanish life and colonization, which enable the reader to comprehend more clearly the basis of the intelligent administration of government by viceregal officials and the refinements and polite customs of the enlightened society, developed by educational institutions of various kinds, which early advanced its students to the college and university levels, where scholarship soon began to manifest itself among both the natives and the Spanish settlers. This survey, therefore, reveals the ever-broadening influences that brought about civilization and Christianity in America.

The editor of these studies is very grateful to the Right Reverend Monsignor Peter Guilday, the Editor of the *Catholic Historical Review*, for permission to reprint this scholarly piece of work by Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, delivered on the occasion of the annual meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, held in December, 1937, at Philadelphia.

PAUL J. FOIK, C.S.C., Ph.D.

Chairman of the Commission and President of the Society



The Beginnings of University Life In America*

Today there are hundreds, nay thousands, of colleges and universities dotting the land from Canada to Central America and from Central America to Argentina and Chile. Within the present limits of the United States the development and growth of higher institutions of learning has been so widespread that it is only natural for Americans to believe that University life in North America had its origin here. This belief has been further strengthened by the deep-rooted and prevalent opinion that Spanish colonization in America had for its sole purpose the exploitation of the native populations and the mineral resources of the new continent. Spain, the Inquisition, Philip II and the Roman Catholic Church have been inseparably associated in the mind of the English-speaking world, and it has been concluded that a race which committed the atrocities so vividly portrayed by the earnest but impulsive Bartolomé de las Casas could have had little interest in education, and less still in colleges and universities. Historians, until very recently, have considered the thirteen colonies on the Atlantic seaboard as the nucleus of civilization in America, and they have pointed to the slow material progress of Spanish America as proof incontestable of the deplorable heritage of Spain's misgovernment.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Dr. Joshua L. Chamberlain, ex-president of Bowdoin College, a few years ago, thus speaks of the early universities of South America:

They followed mostly the pattern of those of Spain. Whatever reproaches may be laid against the Jesuits, it cannot be denied that in their early widespread missions they did good service in the cause of education. It was by their efforts . . . that schools of learning in South America followed so closely the Spanish conquest. Through these efforts arose the University of San Marcos in Lima, Peru, which

* Paper read at the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, Philadelphia, December 30, 1937.

received the royal confirmation of Charles V in 1551. Next in 1553, appears that of San Paulo near Bahia, Brazil, which, as a source of knowledge and of civilization, was a power beyond any other in the history of the country. Nearly at the same time arose the University of Santiago de Chile under the protection of Valdivia, the successful general of Pizarro, and in Mexico a university was founded by the Jesuits, largely an ecclesiastical institution after the model of Salamanca and the Sorbonne.

With this passing mention he discards the history of higher education in Spanish America, his reference to Mexico leading the casual reader to imply that of all those mentioned it was the last and least important.

Judging from this statement, it would seem that it was due entirely to the efforts of the Jesuits, who in all justice it must be said did splendid work in the field of education, that any thought was given to the subject in the Spanish colonies. But if we take Mexico for instance, we find that the Jesuits did not arrive until 1572. By that time the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico had been in operation almost twenty years, having been officially opened in 1553. There were, besides the university, at least five colleges or general houses of study, not including seminaries, and numerous private teachers who were engaged in educating the youth of the land. Obviously, it cannot be said, in view of these circumstances, that it was due entirely to the efforts of the Jesuits that interest in education developed in Mexico. Brief as the statement of Dr. Chamberlain is, it reveals sufficiently the misconceptions generally held in the United States concerning the history of education in Hispanic America even by those who are well informed. With regard to the establishment of the University of Lima, Peru, it should be noted that two decrees were issued by Charles V in 1551, providing for the establishment of a center of general studies or universities in Mexico and Lima respectively. These royal *cedulas* were not a confirmation of an accomplished fact but orders for the creation of the first two universities in the two Americas. There is no ground for maintaining that the University of Lima, Peru, was the first. The facts are that the royal decree for its erection was issued at the same time as that of Mexico

and that the order was actually fulfilled in Mexico first, where the University was officially opened in 1553, before that of Lima.¹

Let us take a glance at the relative progress of education in Mexico and the thirteen English colonies at the beginning of the American Revolution. By 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico had been in continuous operation for two hundred and twenty-three years. During that time it had granted 1,162 doctors' and masters' degrees in all four faculties: Theology, Arts, Canon Law and Civil Law; and it had granted 29,882 bachelors degrees, besides numerous licentiates not recorded. At that time there were in Mexico, in addition to the university, fourteen different colleges or general houses of study of similar rank, many of whose students took graduate courses in the university. Now if we turn to the thirteen American colonies we find that there were nine colleges, not one of which could rightly be called a university. Not until 1779, as a result of the efforts of Thomas Jefferson, was the College of William and Mary, which had been originally granted a charter in 1692 but which did not actually open until 1693, reorganized as a university. The colleges founded within the present United States were: Harvard, in 1636; William and Mary, in 1693; Yale, in 1701; the College of Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania, in 1749; King's College, now Columbia University, in 1754; Brown, in 1764; Dartmouth, in 1769; Queen's Rutgers, in 1766; and Hampden-Sidney, in 1776.

In sharp contrast we find seven colleges had been established in Mexico City alone before the end of the sixteenth century: Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco (1536); San Juan de Letrán (1548); Santa Maria de Todos Santos (1573); San Pedro y San Pablo (1573); San Ildefonso (1573); San Gregorio (1575); and San Bernardo y San Miguel (1576). These were not seminaries or theological schools but colleges in the medieval sense of the word; that is, centers of general studies. In addition to these colleges the various religious Orders in Mexico maintained special houses of study for those who were destined for the priesthood. This clearly

¹ The full text of the royal decrees is found in the extremely rare *Cedulario de Encina*, printed in Madrid in 1596.

indicates an interest in education not suspected by many American scholars and almost totally ignored up to the present.

To understand better this general interest in higher education in New Spain, it is necessary to glance briefly at the early years of the conquest and at the organization of society in the new colony won to Spain by the heroic efforts of Cortés and his fearless companions.

Remarkable men, indeed, were the conquistadores, men of boundless and varied ambitions as well as of stern and limitless courage. Heretofore, we have been wont to think of them as cruel, heartless, bloody, unprincipled men, whose sole ambition was gold and glory at any cost, who slew the natives wantonly, who enslaved them, who delighted in their slow and painful death. But when we examine the impressive and voluminous records which they left to posterity, when we look into their everyday life, it is surprising to find them so human and withal so noble in their aspirations, so Christian in their piety.

When we examine the records impartially, we find a far different picture from that to which we have been accustomed. The Spaniards were not angels, but they were not fiends incarnate either. They were, like all of us, human. But let us turn to the sixteenth century and see them as they were. Garcia Icazbalceta writes:

It was then that the great political and social revolution that changed the face of the new land took place, and that the foundations of the society in which we live today were laid down. To be present at the birth of that culture, to see how the spirit of a new people was formed, how the line of cleavage which separated the two foreign and practically rival races began to disappear through association in the schools, how the Church and the State coöperated to bring about the enlightenment of the people, and how the cultivation of the arts soon flourished are subjects that cannot be lacking in interest.

A mere handful of Spaniards had succeeded in conquering within two years, by their resourcefulness, their daring and their cunning, a native population variously estimated between four and six millions of people. The most powerful influence in the conquest of this vast empire had been the prevalent dissatisfaction felt by the subjects of the Aztec emperor and the natural objec-

tion to human sacrifices. Here, then, was a large population used to agricultural labor, with a native nobility made up of powerful chiefs through whom the masses could be controlled. The land was productive and rich in minerals. The new lords immediately set about to establish a feudal society based on land tenure. To make stable the new organization the native nobility had to be won over to the new order and made part of it. The religious spirit of the conquerors was as strong and as sincere as that of the missionaries. It was realized from the very beginning that the leaders of the conquered race had to be converted to the new religion and made acquainted with European civilization in order that through them the masses might be eventually civilized also. Thus the first efforts at education were directed to this end.

On December 15, 1524, four years after the conquest, Rodrigo de Albornoz, one of the king's high officers in New Spain, addressed Charles V in these words:

In order that the sons of the *caciques* [Indian chiefs or lords] and the lords of the land, Most Powerful Master, be instructed in the faith, it is necessary that Your Majesty order that a college be established where they may be taught to read and where they may receive instruction in grammar [Latin] and philosophy and other arts that may fit them to become missionaries. It will be of far greater value and more fruit will be gathered in bringing this people to the faith by one of these who come from among them than from fifty come from Spain. For its maintenance and buildings any one of the small places on the lake will be sufficient, if the College is placed under one who is not self-seeking.

The same opinion we find repeated shortly afterwards by the anonymous informer of the king who in his secret "Notes to His Majesty" says:

It is highly advisable that a center of general studies be established in Tenxtitlan [Mexico City] where instruction in grammar, arts, and theology may be imparted to the natives of the land. All the sons of the principal lords of the country should attend.

The *Ayuntamiento* of the city had frequently petitioned the viceroy to secure teachers for the instruction both of the natives and Spaniards. In 1533, while Bishop Zumárraga was in Spain,

he presented a memorial to the Council of the Indies in which he declared:

It is necessary that there be [sent] some teachers of grammar both for the Spaniards and for the natives. May Your Majesty provide accordingly, making some concessions for that purpose.

To this interesting suggestion, the Council noted on the margin of the document still preserved in the archives of Seville: "Being so, let them [the teachers] be provided with as much as eight *reales* a day until they embark."

But it was not only the royal officers, the *Ayuntamiento*, and the bishop who urged the need of establishing schools and of providing a center of general study or university in Mexico. Viceroy Mendoza himself wrote the king about this time:

Let a university be established where the natives and the sons of the Spaniards may receive instruction in the things of our holy Catholic faith and in the other faculties. Realizing the importance of this measure, I have already appointed persons to all the faculties that they might read their courses, in the hope that a university will be founded with all the faculties. I have given for that purpose some stock ranches [*estancias*] of my own with certain cattle.

This was about the year 1539, but unfortunately we have no details about the teachers of this pioneer attempt to establish an institution of higher learning, what were the courses offered, or where this forerunner of the University was located. It is particularly worthy of notice that by this time (eighteen years after the conquest) whatever animosity may have existed between the natives and the Spaniards had completely disappeared, for it is clearly stated by the viceroy that the university is to be for the two races indistinctly.

But more significant still is the fact that before this temporary center of general education was established by the viceroy, the first real college to be established in North America was founded expressly for Indians. This was the College of Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco, formally opened on January 6, 1536, for the purpose of teaching Indian boys religion, good manners, reading, writing, Latin grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, music and medicine. Let

it not be thought that the teachers of this first institution of higher learning in North America were obscure or ignorant men. Among the first teachers were men like Fray Arnaldo de Basacio, a French scholar of distinction; Fray Garcia de Cisneros, one of the first twelve Franciscans and the first provincial of his Order in Mexico; Fray Andrés Olmos, a distinguished linguist and famous missionary, companion of the saintly Bishop Zumárraga; Fray Juan Caona, a distinguished graduate of the University of Paris, as humble as he was learned; Fray Francisco de Bustamante, one of the great orators of his day; Fray Juan Focher, a French doctor of laws of the University of Paris; and Fray Bernardino Sahagun, the famous historian.

This college was under the direction of the Franciscans and so well did it do its work that within fifteen years after its establishment its graduates were actually teaching Spanish novices in the Franciscan monastery of Mexico City. Here we have an almost paradoxical case where the conquered race furnished teachers to the conquerors before half of the conquistadores were dead. From this college came noted teachers of the native languages, useful secretaries who greatly helped the over-burdened missionaries, enlightened magistrates for the native villages, and skilled musicians and artisans. Type-setters from this school excelled Spanish artisans. So well did the Indians profit by the instruction received at this college that some of the Spaniards became apprehensive of the advisability of imparting such training and education to the natives. Jerónimo López, one of the advisers of the viceroy, wrote that the religious

not content with teaching the Indians to read and write, to set up type, to play the flute, the cornet, and the organ and to be musicians, have decided to teach them Latin grammar. The Indians apply themselves so diligently that there are boys, and their number increases each day, who speak Latin as elegantly as Tullius [Cicero]. . . . It is amazing to see what they write in Latin, such as letters and dialogues.

The reaction to the education of the Indians in the arts was similar to that experienced by some of the leaders in the South in regard to the education of the negro.

There was another class which engaged the attention of those interested in raising the general level of society in New Spain. Due to the small number of Spanish women who came in the first years of the conquest, the Spaniards soon began to marry freely into the native population and from these relations there arose a new social class—the mestizo—which for a time was considered inferior to the pure-blooded Indian. By 1540, this new class had become so numerous that it constituted a serious problem. Being considered inferior to the pure-blooded Spaniard and the pure-blooded Indian, it suffered greatly from neglect, until Bishop Zumárraga began to take measures to assist and to educate it. In reply to various representations, made to the king by the *Ayuntamiento* and royal officials, he ordered on various occasions that the mestizo children be gathered in a school where they could be cared for and given proper instruction. The result of the king's repeated orders and the growing interest in this class which spread to the various religious Orders, particularly the Franciscans, was the establishment of a school at first, which in 1548, became the College of San Juan de Letrán, where similar instruction to that given the Indian boys at Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco was given the mestizos. The king granted the college a charter and provided moderate funds for its support. This college was placed under the direction of three religious, one of whom served as rector each year. Such students as showed special ability were allowed later to attend the university to take such courses as were not offered in the college. Those who showed no ability in the sciences and letters were taught a trade.

Thus we see official colleges established (before 1550) for both the Indians and the mestizos where they could complete their higher education and pursue the study of the various arts and sciences. The failure to provide similar institutions for the Spaniards may arouse some surprise. Was this due to a lack of interest on the part of the conquistadores and early settlers who may have been indifferent to the problem? Not exactly. In 1539, we find the Dominicans declaring in a letter to the king the importance of establishing a center of general studies or a university for the Spaniards and Creoles, and stating that "the

desire to learn [on the part of the Spaniards and Creoles] is so great, and so numerous are the young men who go to Spain to complete their studies that the land is rapidly becoming depopulated." Allowing for some exaggeration, the fact remains that by that time the Spanish and Creole youths were going in numbers to study in Spain for lack of facilities in New Spain.

From the beginning of the conquest there were private teachers who gave the children of the conquistadores and of the new settlers the rudiments of education and prepared them for higher study. We know that in 1536, a certain González Dávila de Valverde, who had a bachelor's degree, was licensed by the king to teach grammar in Mexico; there are references in the minutes of the Cabildo of Mexico City to private teachers employed in the city; a certain Diego Díaz, another bachelor of arts, taught grammar in 1550; and the distinguished writer, Cervantes de Salazar, later to become the first holder of the chair of rhetoric at the university, is also known to have made a living during his first years in Mexico by giving private lessons.

But all the Spaniards and Creoles in Mexico were not able to send their children to Spain to complete their education. It was for this reason that we have seen how repeated requests were made by the *Ayuntamiento*, the viceroy and Bishop Zumárraga for a center of general study in Mexico. It was because of the urgent demand of the Spaniards and Creoles for such an institution that the viceroy established what was equivalent to a temporary university as early as 1540. It was perhaps to this incident that Herrera refers when he says that Las Casas petitioned the king in 1539, and was successful in securing an order from the king for the establishment of a university in Mexico. Again and again the *Ayuntamiento* had requested the establishment from the viceroy of "a university of all the sciences where the natives and the sons of the Spaniards might receive instruction in the things pertaining to our holy faith and in all the other faculties."

It was not until September 21, 1551, that Charles V at last decided to issue *cedulas* providing for the establishment of a university in Lima, Peru, and another in Mexico. The evidence available does not show that the Jesuits had any direct influence

on the decision of the emperor. This memorable document which may be called the charter of the two pioneer universities of the New World reads:

In order to serve God and the public welfare of our kingdoms, it is convenient that our vassals and natural subjects have therein universities and centers of general studies where they may be instructed in all the sciences and faculties. We, therefore, because of our great love and our desire to favor and honor those who live in our Indies, and in order to banish the darkness of ignorance from there forever, hereby create, establish, and order to be founded in the city of Lima, of the Kingdom of Peru, and in the city of Mexico, of New Spain, a university or center of general studies in each respectively, and it is our will to grant to all those persons that may be graduated in the said universities the enjoyment of all the privileges and exemptions in our Indies, Islands, and Tierra Firme de Mar Oceano, now enjoyed by those who are graduated by the University of Salamanca.

Thus was ordered the establishment of the University of Mexico, founded by the expressed will of the King of Spain, who, according to some, thought only of maintaining his subjects beyond the seas in the most complete ignorance, and of deriving from them the greatest possible revenue.

One thousand pesos of gold annually were granted for its maintenance out of the royal treasury, in addition to the revenue derived from the stock ranches originally donated by Viceroy Mendoza for the purpose. Though the amount was far from being sufficient, it served to start the first university in North America.

Unfortunately, before the order so long awaited by Viceroy Mendoza, who had hoped to establish officially a center of general education arrived, he was transferred to Peru. It fell to his successor, Don Luis de Velasco, to carry out the command. We do not know just when the *cedula* arrived in Mexico, but it was not until January 25, 1553, on the feast of Saint Paul, that the official inauguration took place. The viceroy in gala dress, the entire Audiencia in full uniform, all the highest officials and magistrates of the realm, and the various religious Orders with their habits gathered on that day in the Church of San Pablo of the Augustinians. The colorful assembly devoutly heard a Mass sung to the Holy Spirit and then proceeded to elect a rector and a chancellor

in accordance with the royal order. The first rector was the Oidor Don Antonio Rodríguez de Quesada, and the chancellor elected was Oidor Gómez de Santillana. Saint Paul was declared the patron saint of the university.

The viceroy rented a house, belonging to Doña Catalina de Montejo, to serve as a university hall until a building was erected for the purpose. This house was located at the corner of Arzobispado and Seminario Streets. Here the classes were officially inaugurated on June 3, with a brilliant Latin oration by Cervantes de Salazar. To give all the pomp possible to the occasion, the viceroy, the Audiencia and the most prominent officials of Church and State attended the ceremony. All the classes were not inaugurated on the same day. It was decided to open each class on one of the succeeding days in order that all the officials could be present. Each professor inaugurated his course with an appropriate Latin oration.

Registration began on June 13, 1553, before Juan Pérez de la Fuente, royal notary public. The honor of being the first students to enroll in a university in America belongs to four brothers: Don Pedro, Don Lope, Don Diego, and Don Alonso de Castilla. These four young men were the first to present themselves. "They asked to be admitted to the study of arts [philosophy] and to be granted the privileges enjoyed by students of the university." After satisfying the requirements for entrance they took the oath to obey the rector in all things *licitis et honestis*.

It is worthy of notice that the first faculty was selected from men of letters residing in Mexico at the time. Not one was brought from Spain to fill a single chair. The first to hold the chair of rhetoric and the one to inaugurate the first class in the new university was Francisco Cervantes de Salazar. He was a native of Toledo, had studied in Spain under the leading teachers of his day, and had won renown as a distinguished Latinist before he came to Mexico in 1550. He was the author of a number of books and wrote an introduction to the works of the famous Spanish humanist, Luis Vives. Before coming to Mexico he had occupied a chair in the University of Osuna in Spain. That same year he took the examinations for the Master of Arts de-

gree and received it from the new university, later obtaining a doctor's degree in theology. In 1555, he was ordained to the priesthood and became a canon of the Cathedral. In 1563, and again in 1567, he held the office of rector of the university and in the latter years of his life he was made official chronicler of new Spain.

The first professor of scholastic theology was Fray Alonso de la Veracruz of whom Cervantes de Salazar said, "He is the most eminent master of arts and theology in the land . . . In him virtue competes with the most exquisite and admirable doctrine." He, also, had come from the province of Toledo. Before he came to Mexico he had studied in the famous University of Alcalá de Henares where he took a course in rhetoric, studying theology and arts at Salamanca, where he obtained his master's degree. He joined the Augustinian Order in 1536, after his arrival in Mexico, and was responsible for the establishment of a theological seminary in Michoacan as early as 1540. Upon his appointment to the faculty of the university he had three of his books reprinted to be used as textbooks.² Realizing the intricacies of scholasticism, he modestly declares in the introduction to his *Recognitio Summularum*:

This is not an attempt to put in anything new, but to give to the old such an organization as to enable the young student to gather the desired fruit in a shorter time.

Few men of the sixteenth century either in Europe or in America can compare with this singular figure in learning, in virtue, or in courage. He was the author of many books. During his lifetime he was offered the most flattering posts by the Council of the Indies, but he refused them all. He was distinguished with the highest office of his Order, that of vicar-general, after serving three times as Provincial. His motto was quite modern: "Keep track of time", and he lived up to it. Not a day of his busy life was wasted. He was an indefatigable worker and a man who had the courage to speak his convictions at a time when few men dared. When Fray Luis de León, the distinguished Spanish friar

² His *Physica speculatio*, *Dialectica resolutio cum textu Aristotelis*, and *Recognitio summularum*, are in the University of Texas Library.

and poet, was imprisoned by the Inquisition in Spain for his translation of the *Song of Songs*, Veracruz openly defended him and on one occasion declared: "Well in all truth, if they burn him they may burn me, because as he speaks, so do I believe."

The first professor of theology was the Prior of the Dominican Convent of Mexico, Fray Pedro de la Peña. He too had been trained in Salamanca and had come to Mexico in 1550. Soon after his arrival he mastered the Mexican language and became Prior of Caxaca. He was a learned man, distinguished by his missionary zeal, his wide interest in education, and his great humility. In 1559, the viceroy made him his private confessor, and in 1562, Peña went to Spain as Provincial of his Order, and later was appointed Bishop of Quito in Peru. Twenty-one years later he was made Bishop of Michoacan, but died before he could return to Mexico.

Another of the first teachers of theology was Juan Negrete, who received his master's degree from the University of Paris and who had the distinction of serving as the second rector of the new university. "His knowledge of philosophy and mathematics is surprising," declares Cervantes, "and he is not ignorant of medicine." In later years he became archdeacon of the Cathedral of Mexico.

The chair of papal decrees was given first to Dr. Bartolomé Melgarejo, who held it only for one year and was then succeeded by Dr. Mateo Arevalo y Sedeña. For twenty years this able teacher held his post and faithfully fulfilled his duties. In recognition of his services the university pensioned him. He has the distinction of being the first university professor in America to be pensioned at the termination of his period of service. It has been said of him that he was a man of unusual ability in dialectics, who could defend sophisms or tear them to pieces. He was well versed in the most obscure phases of papal decrees and was the only teacher of canon law who could quote his own opinion to his class.

The first professor of canon law was Dr. Morones of whom Cervantes de Salazar says: "Jurisprudence owes him much. His students enjoy his lectures because of their clearness."

The first to teach grammar was Fray Blas de Bustamante, who had been teaching this subject in Mexico prior to his appointment for twenty years. After his appointment he petitioned the university to grant him the degree of master of arts, offering to take the required examinations and requesting that he be excused from the payment of the fees required for conferring the degree. The petition was granted and was the first of its kind. While teaching he continued his studies, carrying five courses in addition to his class, and after a few years he obtained his doctor's degree, which was conferred on him with due ceremony. One of the sons of Hernando Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico, acted as his sponsor. In 1567, he became a lawyer of the Audiencia of Mexico. In describing him and his work, Cervantes de Salazar gives us some idea of the method he used in his classes.

He whom you see walking through the great class room below, so full of students, is the teacher Bustamante, who from eight to nine in the morning, and from two to three in the afternoon, teaches grammar . . . with care and intelligence. He carefully explains the authors and discloses and points out with great discernment the beauties of the subject. He is not a little versed in dialectics and philosophy in which he has a master's degree. Since he has been teaching the youth of Mexico for twenty-six years, there is hardly a sacred orator or a teacher now living who has not been his student.

The first professor of arts (philosophy) was Juan Garcia, a canon of the cathedral. He was a man "worthy of praise for his depth and vast learning." He taught arts and philosophy for five years, from 1553 to 1558.

The main purpose of the institution was to train the young clergy and the youth of Mexico in the various faculties. The most important and the most popular courses were those leading to degrees in theology, in canon law, civil law, philosophy and medicine. The latter, together with mathematics, were not taught in the beginning, but were added later and gained in prominence with time. Latin was the basis for all professional studies and the student had to present a certificate to prove that he had sufficiently mastered the language before entering the University.

In order to enter the school of theology the applicant had first to obtain a degree in arts. In 1554, a regulation was adopted providing that candidates for a degree in theology had to take a course in *prima* of theology the first year, one in sacred scriptures during the third year, and one in papal decrees during the fourth year. In addition to this they also had to write a dissertation to show their knowledge in the general field of theology. For a degree in canon law two special courses on the subject were required during the first years of the institution, but this requirement was raised to six years later. The course in arts was in fact a course in philosophy. It included the study of dialectics, logic, metaphysics, cosmology, embracing mathematics and physics, physiology, psychology and ethics. A degree in arts was prerequisite to admission in the school of theology and of medicine.

The importance attached to the study of grammar may be gathered from the statement found in the Chronicle of the University:

Grammar is the bed and root of all sciences and letters, and unless one is a good grammarian he cannot possess a good foundation, or be well grounded in Latin.

Now as to the original chairs: there were seven of these established in the beginning: Sacred Scripture, taught by Alonso de la Veracruz; Canon Law, taught by Dr. Morones; Papal Decrees, taught by Melgarejo; Arts, taught by Juan Garcia; Rhetoric, taught by Cervantes de Salazar; and Grammar, taught by Blas de Bustamante. These chairs were subsequently divided into sections. The method followed was to divide each one into *primas* and *visperas*, to which were added allied subjects or branches as the need arose. Theology was divided into three chairs: *Primas*, *Visperas* and *Scripturas*. The last of these was in turn divided into St. Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, and Sacred Scriptures. Law was divided into *Primas* and *Visperas* of Canon Law, of Papal Decrees, and of Civil Law, Institutes and Clementine Decrees. Medicine, which was not made a regular part of the curriculum until 1580, had a chair of *Primas*, which was concerned chiefly with practice. Art was divided into *Primas* of Philosophy and Arts.

In Rhetoric there was only one chair of *Primas*, while there were *Primas* and *Visperas* in Grammar. This consisted chiefly of the study of Latin authors. Beginning with seven chairs, the classes were subdivided and new subjects were added until the faculty came to include twenty-four different chairs.

The chairs were of two kinds: the *catedra* and the *catedrilla*, the first was permanent while the second was a temporary appointment. The Audiencia officially declared on July 21, 1553, that the two chairs of theology, the two chairs of canons, and the *prima* of grammar were to be considered as *catedras*, appointment to which was for life during good behaviour. The rest of the chairs were to be vacated every four years, with the exception of arts, which was to be held for a period of three years at a time.

What was the method of instruction? In the main it was scholastic. The University of Mexico was fashioned after that of Salamanca, by whose statutes it was ruled until late in the seventeenth century. It represents the transplanting of the old mediaeval university to America. The scholastic system has long since fallen into disrepute, but Garcia Icazbalceta has ably pointed out that

scholastic philosophy . . . has perhaps contributed more than any other human discipline to the development of the intelligence, and in its long reign through the centuries boasts of names no other school of thought can surpass in glory. . . . But the powerful dialectic of scholasticism was perverted by stupid disputes to sustain puerile and empty arguments which finally discredited it.

The procedure in the class room was first the presentation of the subject by the professor, who divided it into a series of theses, forming related groups which were taken up in due time for discussion. The propositions were presented, the terms were carefully defined, the premises laid, and the various solutions and points of attack were suggested. The class then joined in the discussion, which was led and directed by the professor. Finally came the criticism of the thesis and its classification as metaphysical, physical and moral. Disputations were common and heated. Bulletins were posted on the doors of the various halls announcing the secular or theological problems that would be discussed on a given date in order that all those interested might attend.

The controversies were presided over by one of the teachers, who sat at one end of the room on an elevated platform in his doctor's gown, mace in hand. It was his duty to direct the discussion and clear up obscure points. The arguments became so heated that the participants some times came to blows, the use of blunt arms in such scuffles not being unusual. The contestants had their *padrinos* or sponsors, who often took part in the discussion.

Grammar, apparently being a freshman course, corresponding to our English 1, its rules were more detailed. The students were required to prepare definite assignments on the conjugation of verbs, the declension of nouns, and the parsing of sentences. The professor was particularly enjoined to keep a close check on the work of the students, to be punctual in his attendance, and to follow closely the program of study outlined for him. Every Saturday he was to check up on the work of each student, supposedly by giving them a test or taking up some written exercise, much as we do today.

Of the text books used in the early years, Fray Alonso de la Veracruz used his own, *Recognitio Summularum*, *Dialectica Resolutio cum textu Aristotelis*, and *Physica Speculatio*. But he was not the only professor to print his own texts. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar used his *Dialogi* in the course on rhetoric. Selections from Ovid, Cicero, Cato, Virgil, Martial and other Latin classics were also used. In the course on philosophy a book by Fray Domingo Soto, *La Logica*, was used. The well known *Arte de Nebrija* by the famous Spanish humanist was the recognized text for the course in grammar. Selections from Aristotle and Plato were also used in the grammar course. The Bible, the records of Church laws, papal decrees, and the works of various religious authors must have been used in the different courses in theology and canon law. Many of the professors, following an old custom, wrote their own lectures which they read to the class and there are many manuscript works by the various professors still extant in the Mexican archives. In the Garcia Library there is a most interesting manuscript treatise on mathematics, geometry, archi-

ture and physics written by one of the instructors of the university towards the close of the sixteenth century.

The grading system in vogue followed the practice of Salamanca. It consisted of "A" for approved, "C" for failure (*condenado*) and "L y N" for condition (*non liquet*). In later years the "C" was replaced by "R" meaning not approved (*reprobado*) and the use of "L y N" was discontinued. Thus a student either made an "A" or an "R".

Every student had to register each year within forty days after the election of the new rector, which generally took place on June 12. In registering, the student had to declare the school he wished to enter and to swear to obey the rector in all things, lawful and honest. The registration fee was two *reales* (about ten cents). But this was only the initial fee. Freshman had to pay an additional *peso* for the examination in grammar which they had to take to prove their proficiency. An additional two *reales* had to be paid for each course for which the student registered. The actual cost of registering was nominal, the thing that was prohibitive was the fee for a degree.

Candidates for the degree of bachelor of arts had to pay four *pesos* to the university treasury, nine to the three members of the board of examiners, three to the rector on condition that he be present at the examination, two to the officer who conferred the degree, three to the one who presided at the ceremony, two to the two beadles, and four to the secretary for recording the proceedings and giving the candidate the degree, a total of twenty-seven *pesos*. This degree was the least expensive of all, since it was required for entrance to most of the other schools. The total fees paid by a candidate for the degree of bachelor of medicine was forty-four *pesos*. A candidate for the degree of doctor in philosophy, theology, or medicine had to pay about three hundred and fifty *pesos*. This sum was high, but not so high as many have affirmed, citing the fact as evidence that only the rich and powerful were able to attend the University. The expense of the ceremonies accompanying the granting of a doctor's degree was excessively high, but this was generally borne by the *padrino* or sponsor of the act. Efforts were made very early to cut down the

unnecessary expenses of such ceremonies and the constitution provided that in the case of all the degrees, with the exception of that of doctor, a student who was unable to pay the stipulated fees should make an application to the faculty to be excused from their payment and the faculty would grant it, if found meritorious. Consequently, what was beyond the means of the poor student was the ceremony attendant upon the granting of the degree.

The students who registered throughout the sixteenth century came from all classes, the sons of the merchants along with the sons of conquistadores and the poor Indians. As in our day, college life was full of social events and merry-makings. There were no athletics, to be sure, but there were bull fights to take the place of our football games, and there were masquerades, and jousts, and cavalcades to take the place of tennis and baseball and other lighter sports. The official festivals were so numerous that one wonders, even as today, when the students had time to study. There were, for example, the feast days of the various patron saints of the university and of the city, there were historical dates such as *La Noche Triste*, corresponding to Washington's winter at Valley Forge, and there were the *oposiciones*, public contests in which candidates for vacant professorships displayed in open debate their qualifications for the position and which correspond to the old-time political campaigns. On most of these occasions there were carnivals, dances, banquets, bull fights and public tournaments. All in all, life at the old university was as full and as restless as ours.

Let me briefly describe the ceremonies attendant upon the granting of a doctor's degree in the old days. The candidate first stood a severe private examination. If he was approved, a date was set for a public examination designed to give the successful candidate an opportunity to display his talents. In the meantime the candidate invited a prominent, wealthy, and if possible, noble, gentleman to be his *padrino* or sponsor in the ceremonies that were to follow. To be asked to sponsor such an act was considered a very high honor, but this often proved expensive. The sponsor had to bear all the expenses of the occasion. He sent out elaborate invitations, paid for the ring of the candidate, purchased his cap and

gown, paid all the fees, and gave a sumptuous banquet. The ring, cap, and gown were usually displayed on a velvet cushion for a few days on the balcony of the sponsor's house. On the day of the ceremony the insignia of the candidate were removed from the balcony and taken in an elegant coach to the university. This was the occasion for the initial procession. The sponsor, masters and doctors preceded the coach on gayly caparisoned horses, and the rest of the company followed it. The procession went to the archbishop's home. Here it was reformed, with the archbishop, accompanied by the candidate on his right and the sponsor on the left, leading. They were followed by the viceroy, who in turn was preceded by two heavy silver maces, then came the Oidores of the royal Audiencia in order of seniority, then the rector, the doctors, and the other members of the faculty and friends of the candidate. The investiture took place with great pomp and the sponsor had the privilege of placing the ring upon the finger of the candidate as a token of his wedlock to knowledge. If the degree was in medicine, the candidate received spurs instead of the ring. The cap and gown resembled those of the University of Salamanca.

But let us turn from the stately, prosperous and colorful University of Mexico to the beginnings of college life within the present limits of the United States. It was in the year 1636, on September 8, that the legislature of Massachusetts Bay Colony passed an act which was to result in the foundation of present-day Harvard College. Previous to this action a small school had been laboriously maintained by the struggling colony. Now it was felt that a seminary, where young men could be trained for the ministry, should be provided. The act of the legislature read:

The Court agree to give Four Hundred Pounds towards a school or College, whereof Two Hundred Pounds shall be paid next year, and Two Hundred Pounds when the work is finished, and the next Court to appoint where and what building.

The main purpose was to train ministers; thus the college in its inception was not what could be properly termed a university, but a theological seminary.

The first superintendent was Nathaniel Eaton, a choice that proved most unfortunate. "Of this man," declared a historian of the College, "nothing has been transmitted worthy of being remembered. He was 'convented before the magistrates', and convicted of being passionate, quarrelsome, negligent, and cruel." But in spite of the mismanagement of Eaton, an unforeseen circumstance came to give permanent life to the half-born college. John Harvard, a new arrival from England, a man of culture, of deep interest in education, sick unto death with consumption, realized the significance of the projected college and upon his death in 1638, little over a year after his arrival, left half of his estate and his entire library to the college. Just what the half of his estate amounted to in cash has never been determined, but his library has been variously estimated between 250 and 300 books, a respectable collection for those days. When the legislature again met, it agreed to name the college John Harvard in recognition of his benevolence and in his memory. Thus came into being the present University of Harvard, the oldest and the most respected of our higher institutions of learning.

Its early growth was slow and filled with vicissitudes. Under Henry Dunster, who succeeded Eaton in 1640, it made slow but solid progress and in 1642, the first class was graduated under his presidency. It was in that year that the first charter was drafted regulating the college. Under Dunster's successors the college made progress, but under Increase Mather it became involved in the religious controversy that split the colony during the closing years of the century. Throughout the first years it was beset by poverty, the building was in urgent need of repairs, the president was paid in kind and had a difficult time keeping body and soul together, and the members of the teaching staff were even worse off.

First year students studied "logic, physics, disputes, Greek, etymology and syntax, grammar, Hebrew and rhetoric"; second year students, "ethics and politics, disputes, Greek and Hebrew, and rhetoric". Third year students followed "arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, Greek, Hebrew, rhetoric, history, and nature of plants". At this time there were three teachers besides the president.

Turning now to the southern colonies we find that in 1692, King William and Queen Mary granted a charter to the College of William and Mary in Virginia. This college, opened in 1693, has the distinction of having had its plans drawn by the famous English architect of Christ's Hospital, Sir Christopher Wren, and is the second college to be founded within the present limits of the United States. It is worthy of note that in the charter provision was made for this college to supply a certain amount of tobacco yearly for the support of the "infant institution of Harvard".

William and Mary has been called the mother of statesmen. It was there that Washington obtained his surveyor's permit, that Jefferson went to school, that Phi Beta Kappa was founded, and that Monroe studied. But time does not permit our going into details. Life at William and Mary was less somber than at Harvard College and there were more points of similarity between its students and those of the University of Mexico.

But the contrast presented between the establishment of the first colleges and universities in Hispanic America and within the present limits of the United States is worthy of notice. One is inclined to reflect on the inverse progress of the institutions in one and the other country. The University of Mexico came into being in relative opulence, and although its professors were underpaid, they never suffered penury and want. On the other hand, the old College of Harvard had its origin in the most modest and humble circumstances. For years it had a precarious existence amid contending strife and dissension, but it finally evolved in the nineteenth century into our most revered and honored institution. The University of Mexico rapidly grew in splendor and prestige and for many years was the outstanding fountain of knowledge and learning in Spanish North America, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century it had fallen into disrepute and after a halting existence was finally suppressed in 1865 by Maximilian, not to be reopened until 1910 when it was reorganized. Since that date it has made rapid progress and promises to become once more the leading institution of learning in Mexico.

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